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Context of 'June 24, 1993: New York 'Landmarks' Bombing Plot Is Foiled'

This is a scalable context timeline. It contains events related to the event **June 24, 1993: New York 'Landmarks' Bombing Plot Is Foiled**. You can narrow or broaden the context of this timeline by adjusting the zoom level. The lower the scale, the more relevant the items on average will be, while the higher the scale, the less relevant the items, on average, will be.

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July 1989: FBI Monitors Future Bombers Weapons Training Sessions; Fail to Follow Up

FBI agents photograph Islamic radicals shooting weapons at the Calverton Shooting Range, on Long Island, New York. The group is secretly monitored as they shoot AK-47 assault rifles, semiautomatic handguns, and revolvers for four successive weekends. The use of weapons such as AK-47's are illegal in the US, but this shooting range is known to be unusually permissive. Ali Mohamed is apparently not at the range but has been training the five men there: El Sayyid Nosair, Mahmud Abouhalima, Mohammed Salameh, Nidal Ayyad, and Clement Rodney Hampton-El. Nosair will assassinate Rabbi Meir Kahane one year later (see November 5, 1990), and the others except for Hampton-El will be convicted of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see February 26, 1993), while Hampton-El will be convicted for a role in the "Landmarks" bombing plot (see June 24, 1993). Some FBI agents have been assigned to watch some Middle Eastern men who are frequenting the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in Brooklyn. Each weekend, Mohamed's trainees drive from Al-Kifah to the shooting range, and a small FBI surveillance team follows them. The FBI has been given a tip that some Palestinians at Al-Kifah are planning violence targeting Atlantic City casinos. By August, the casino plot fails to materialize, and the surveillance, including that at the shooting range, comes to an end. Author Peter Lance will later say that why the FBI failed to follow up the shooting sessions is a "great unanswered question." (Lance 2003, pp. 29-33; New York Times 10/5/2003)



One of the Calverton surveillance photographs introduced as evidence in court (note that some faces have been blurred out). [Source: National Geographic]

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Late October 1990-October 1992: 'Blind Sheikh' Able to Repeatedly Leave and Reenter US Despite Being on Watch List

In July 1990, the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, was mysteriously able to enter the US and remain there despite being a well known public figure and being on a watch list for three years (see July 1990).

- In late October 1990, he travels to London, so he is out of the US when one of his followers assassinates the Zionist rabbi Meir Kahane on November 5, 1990 (see November 5, 1990). He returns to the US in mid-November under the name "Omar Ahmed Rahman" and again has no trouble getting back in despite still being on the watch list. (Duke 7/13/1993)
- The State Department revokes his US visa on November 17 after the FBI informs it that he is in the US. (McKinley 12/16/1990)
- In December 1990, Abdul-Rahman leaves the US again to attend an Islamic conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. He returns nine days later and again has no trouble reentering, despite not even having a US visa at this point. (Duke 7/13/1993)

- On December 16, 1990, the New York Times publishes an article titled, "Islamic Leader on US Terrorist List Is in Brooklyn," which makes his presence in the US publicly known. The Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) is said to be investigating why he has not been deported already. (McKinley 12/16/1990)
 - Yet in April 1991, the INS approves his application for permanent residence.
 - He then leaves the US again in June 1991 to go on the religious hajj to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and returns on July 31, 1991. INS officials identify him coming in, but let him in anyway. (Mitchell 4/24/1993; Duke 7/13/1993)
 - In June 1992, his application for political asylum will be turned down and his permanent residence visa revoked. But INS hearings on his asylum bid are repeatedly delayed and still have not taken place when the WTC is bombed in February 1993 (see February 26, 1993). (Lance 2003, pp. 105-106)
 - Abdul-Rahman then goes to Canada around October 1992 and returns to the US yet again. The US and Canada claim to have no documentation on his travel there, but numerous witnesses in Canada see him pray and lecture there. Representative Charles Schumer (D-NY) says, "Here they spent all this time trying to get him out. He goes to Canada and gives them the perfect reason to exclude him and they don't."
 - After the WTC bombing, the US could detain him pending his deportation hearing but chooses not to, saying it would be too costly to pay for his medical bills. (Mitchell 4/24/1993)
- Abdul-Rahman will be involved in the follow up "Landmarks" plot (see June 24, 1993) before finally being arrested later in 1993. It will later be alleged that he was protected by the CIA. In 1995, the New York Times will comment that the link between Abdul-Rahman and the CIA "is a tie that remains muddy." (MacFarquhar 10/2/1995)

Early 1990s: FBI Reportedly Aware of California Training Camps Run by Known Al-Qaeda Operative but Take No Action

Al-Qaeda operative Khalil Deek runs military training camps in Southern California in the early 1990s. Those trained in the camps include followers of the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, and some of the people involved in the 1993 "Landmarks" plot (see June 24, 1993). Deek is a member of an al-Qaeda sleeper cell based in Orange County and has reportedly been under investigation by US intelligence since the late 1980s (see Late 1980s). Rita Katz, a private counterterrorism expert who sometimes works with US officials, will learn of these camps when speaking to an FBI agent in early 2002. According to Katz, she is told that the FBI had known about the camps for "years" but had not acted because of the "wall" between criminal and intelligence investigations. The FBI agent will tell Katz that the information about the camps was "Intel information. Unusable." (Katz 2003, pp. 186-187) Deek also attracts attention for his suspected involvement with Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, the militant group led by Abdul-Rahman, because of the group's plans "to bomb a Masonic temple in Los Angeles." (Anderson 9/15/2005) Katz will conclude that "the FBI had learned that Deek was running military training camps for al-Qaeda in California and was planning to blow up various American targets. And the agency let these people go about their business undisturbed." (Katz 2003, pp. 186-187) Around the same time, Deek also works in Bosnia for a charity suspected of funneling weapons and new recruits to the mujaheddin fighting there (see Early 1990s). In late 1999, Deek will be captured overseas for participation in a planned millennium bombing (see December 11, 1999). It will later be alleged that he was a mole for the Jordanian government (see Shortly After December 11, 1999).

December 1992: Saudi Embassy Pays Radical Militants in US to Fight in Bosnia

Clement Rodney Hampton-El, one of the 1993 "Landmarks" bombers (see June 24, 1993), is summoned to the Saudi Embassy in Washington and told that wealthy Saudis are sponsoring fighters in Bosnia. Hampton-El has longstanding links to the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which is closely tied to the Saudi government (see October 12, 2001). He is given \$150,000 to recruit and train people in the US to fight in Bosnia. (Schindler 2007, pp. 121-122) He starts a militant training camp in Pennsylvania that same month (see December 1992-Early February 1993) and gets \$150,000 overseas from a bin Laden linked charity front (it is not known if this is the same \$150,000 or additional money) (see Late 1992-Early 1993). The Saudi embassy also introduces him to a radical imam named Bilal Philips. Philips, a Canadian citizen and author on Islamic topics, has been employed by the Saudi government since early 1991 to proselytize among US soldiers stationed in Saudi Arabia (see March-September 1991). Philips gives Hampton-El a list of likely candidates who are ex-US soldiers that Philips recently helped convert to Islam. (Schindler 2007, pp. 121-122) That same month, 14 ex-US soldiers go to Bosnia to fight and train there (see December 1992-June 1993). They are led by double agent Ali Mohamed, who, like Hampton-El, is closely tied to the Al-Kifah Refugee Center in New York.

December 1992-Early February 1993: Islamist Militants Learn to Fight at Pennsylvania Training Camp



Mohammed Abouhalima. [Source: Corbis]

Siddig Siddig Ali, Abdo Mohammed Haggag, Abu Ubaidah Yahya, Mohammed Abouhalima, and others train at a militant training camp in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, with weapons and ammunition provided by Yahya and Clement Rodney Hampton-El (see February 21, 1995). Abouhalima will later be convicted for a role in the 1993 WTC bombing, as will his brother (see February 26, 1993) while the others mentioned will be convicted for roles in the related "Landmarks" plot (see June 24, 1993). (USA v. Omar Ahmad Ali Abdel-Rahman et al 7/13/1995, pp. 9) Yahya is the chief instructor, as he is an ex-US Marine who served two tours in Vietnam and teaches at a martial arts academy. Siddig Ali will later say of Yahya, "[H]e's decorated and has a lot of medals... [and he was] a great trainer..." The training even includes mock nighttime assaults on a nearby electric power substation. (Kohlmann 2004, pp. 73) An FBI informant named Garrett Wilson helps lead the FBI to the camp, and the FBI monitors it for two days, January 16 and 17, but the monitoring team is mysteriously pulled away before the end

of the second day (see January 16-17, 1993). In a wiretapped conversation with an FBI informant (most likely Wilson), Siddig Ali says regarding the camp, "Our goal is that these people get extensive and very, very, very good training, so that we can get started at anyplace where jihad (holy war) is needed... And after they receive their training, they go to Bosnia... And whoever survives, I mean, could come and [instruct] somewhere else, or Egypt, or any other place, etc..." (Kohlmann 2004, pp. 73) Hampton-El makes trips to Europe to pick up money from the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) charity front to fund the camp (see Late 1992-Early 1993). TWRA is funneling huge amounts of weapons into Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo but with the tacit approval of the US (see Mid-1991-1996).

Early April 1993: FBI Links Bombers in US to Bosnian Charity Front; But Bosnian Link Is Not Explored



Clement Rodney Hampton-El. [Source: Jolie Stahl]

FBI investigators begin monitoring Clement Rodney Hampton-El's house in New York as they close in on the militants involved in the "Landmarks" plot (see June 24, 1993). They listen in on a call from Hampton-El's right-hand man, Abu Ubaidah Yahya, as he is in Vienna, Austria, picking up money from the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) for the militants in the US tied to the Landmarks plot. Over the next few months, Yahya is tracked as he makes several trips from the US to Vienna, picking up about \$100,000. (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113) Hampton-El had also been in Vienna earlier in the year, picking up more money from TWRA for the plotters (see Late 1992-Early 1993). TWRA is funneling a huge amount of weapons to Muslim Bosnia in violation of a UN embargo but with the tacit approval of the US government (see Mid-1991-1996). It also has ties to radical militants like bin Laden and Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. The Washington Post will later report that, "Intelligence

agencies say they have tapes of telephone calls by Abdul-Rahman to [TWRA's] office." The "Landmarks" bombers are closely associated with Abdul-Rahman and will be convicted along with him. (Pomfret 9/22/1996) A secret 1996 CIA report will state that "according to a foreign government service" Elfatih Hassanein, the head of TWRA, "supports US Muslim extremists in Bosnia." (Central Intelligence Agency 1/1996) But apparently the US does not go after TWRA for its ties to the "Landmarks" plotters and the connection will not be publicized for years.

April 23, 1993: FBI Discovers Follow-up Plot to WTC Bombing; Sudanese Diplomats Are Reportedly Involved

In the wake of the 1993 WTC bombing (see February 26, 1993), Emad Salem is rehired as an FBI informant. Because Salem has the confidence of the group around the "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdul-Rahman connected to the bombing, the FBI is so desperate to hire him back that they pay him over \$1 million to return. It takes time for Salem to fully regain confidences, but on April 23, 1993, Siddig Siddig Ali approaches Salem and asks him to participate in a series of bombings that he is planning. Siddig Ali explains that he wants to simultaneously bomb four landmarks in New York City: the Lincoln and Holland tunnel, the United Nations headquarters, and the New York FBI office. This will later be known as the "Landmarks" plot. Siddig Ali later tells Salem that he has friends in the Sudanese Embassy who had approved the plan and are willing to help with diplomatic license plates and credentials. Wearing a wire, over the next weeks Salem meets and

records others participating in the plot. Many of them, including Siddig Ali, attended a training camp the FBI briefly monitored back in January 1993 (see January 16-17, 1993). (Miller, Stone, and Mitchell 2002, pp. 113-114) The FBI will expand its surveillance of the plotters and roll up the plot a couple of months later (see June 24, 1993). The US will later eject two Sudanese diplomats, Siraj Yousif and Ahmed Yousif Mohamed, for suspicions of involvement in the plot. Both are said to be intelligence agents posing as diplomats. Later in 1993, the US also places Sudan on a list of terrorist countries. (Prial 8/18/1993; Wren 4/11/1996)

June 24, 1993: New York 'Landmarks' Bombing Plot Is Foiled



Informant Emad Salem, pictured bent over in a green shirt, enables the FBI to take surveillance footage like this of the plotters making a bomb. [Source: *National Geographic*]

Eight people are arrested, foiling a plot to bomb several New York City landmarks. The targets were the United Nations building, 26 Federal Plaza, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. This is known as the "Landmarks" or "Day of Terror" plot. The plotters are connected to Ramzi Yousef and the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman. If the bombing, planned for later in the year, had been successful, thousands would have died. An FBI informant named Emad Salem had infiltrated the group, gathering information that leads to arrests of the plotters (see April 23, 1993). (US Congress 7/24/2003) Abdul-Rahman will eventually be sentenced to life in prison for a role in the plot. Nine others will be given long prison terms, including Ibrahim El-Gabrowni and Clement Rodney Hampton-El. (Fried 1/18/1996) Siddig Siddig Ali, who was possibly the main force behind the plot (see April 23, 1993), will eventually be sentenced to only 11 years in prison because he agreed to provide evidence on the other suspects (Weiser 10/16/1999)

July 3, 1993: 'Blind Sheikh' Arrested in Brooklyn

The "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, is arrested in Brooklyn after a long stand off. The "Landmarks" plot was rolled up on June 24, 1993, and many of Abdul-Rahman's close associates were arrested on that day (see June 24, 1993). But Abdul-Rahman moved to the Abu Bakr mosque and stayed there. His presence in a mosque and the many supporters that gathered to surround it makes his arrest difficult. But after long negotiations, on July 3, 1993, he is arrested on immigration charges and taken to prison. (Mitchell 7/3/1993) He will later be charged with a role in the "Landmarks" plot and eventually sentenced to life in prison. (Fried 1/18/1996)

December 16, 1994-May 1995: Osama's Brother-in-Law Khalifa Is Arrested in US



Mohammed Jamal Khalifa. [Source: *CBS News*]

Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, a brother-in-law to bin Laden, is arrested in the US. He is held for visa fraud, but he is believed to be a major terrorist. His arrest takes place at a Holiday Inn in Morgan Hill, California. (Hoge 10/24/2001) That is only about 20 miles from Santa Clara, where double agent Ali Mohamed is running an al-Qaeda cell (see 1987-1998). Counterterrorism expert Steven Emerson will later say of Khalifa and Mohamed, "It seems to me that they were probably in contact. I'm basing that only intuitively on the fact that they were in the same area, they were close to bin Laden, and they would've had an incentive to stay together." (Lance 2006, pp. 167) According to one account, Khalifa is arrested on behalf of the government of Jordan, because he is on trial there. (Hoge 10/24/2001) Another account claims that Philippine authorities "tipped off Federal authorities on Khalifa's movements." (Europa 4/27/1995) He is traveling on a Saudi passport. He'd flown into the US from London on December 1 and has papers indicating he would be heading back to the Philippines. (Lance 2006, pp. 158-159) It has been claimed that the CIA helped him get his US visa (see December 1, 1994). There are many reasons for

US authorities to suspect Khalifa is a major terrorist figure:

- He is arrested with Mohammed Loay Bayazid, one of the dozen or so original members of al-Qaeda. Bayazid had attempted to purchase nuclear material for bin Laden the year before (see December 16, 1994).
- Philippine investigators had recently completed a secret report on terrorist funding. The report focuses on Khalifa, and says his activities in the Philippines strongly link with Muslim extremist movements in Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Russia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Romania, Lebanon, Syria, Pakistan, Albania, the Netherlands, and Morocco. It calls a charity which Khalifa runs a "pipeline through which funding for the local extremists is being coursed." Perhaps not coincidentally, the report was released just one day before Khalifa's arrest in the US (see December 15, 1994).
- His possessions, which are quickly examined and translated, include a handwritten manual in Arabic detailing how to set up a terrorist curriculum at a school in the Philippines, giving lessons in bomb-making and assassination. (Hoge 10/24/2001)
- Khalifa's business card was discovered in a search of the New York City residence of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman in 1993 (see August 1993).
- He is an unindicted coconspirator in the "Landmarks" bombings plot, which would have killed thousands in New York City. The trial is getting underway at this time. Abdul-Rahman will be convicted and sentenced to over 300 years in prison (see June 24, 1993).
- A State Department cable from days after his arrest states Khalifa is a "known financier of terrorist operations and an officer of an Islamic NGO in the Philippines that is a known Hamas front."
- An alias is found in his personal organizer that was also used in a bomb-making manual brought into the US by Ahmad Ajaj, Ramzi Yousef's travel partner, when the two of them came to the US to implement the 1993 World Trade Center bombing (see September 1, 1992).
- Bojinka plotter Wali Khan Amin Shah's phone number is found in Khalifa's possessions. The Bojinka plot, if successful, also would have killed thousands (see January 6, 1995). (Lance 2006, pp. 158-159)
- A number in Pakistan that Ramzi Yousef had used to call the Philippines is found as well. Author Peter Lance will later note that such numbers "should have led the FBI directly to Ramzi Yousef, the world's most wanted man" at the time. (Lance 2006, pp. 160)

However, despite this wealth of highly incriminating material, within weeks of his arrest the US will decide to deport him to Jordan (see January 5, 1995). Over the next four months, even more of his links to terrorist activity will be discovered (see Late December 1994-April 1995). But Khalifa will be deported anyway (see April 26-May 3, 1995), and then soon freed in Jordan (see July 19, 1995).

February 1995: Secret Coconspirator List Proves US Knowledge of Ali Mohamed's Al-Qaeda Criminal Activity



Sections of the unindicted co-conspirator list for the "Landmarks" plot trial. Osama bin Laden is 95 and Ali Mohamed is 109. [Source: National Geographic]

In February 1995, the US government files a confidential court document listing bin Laden and scores of other people as possible co-conspirators in the 1993 New York City "Landmarks" plot (see June 24, 1993). Ali Mohamed's name is on the list, confirming that investigators are aware of his involvement in al-Qaeda operations. Yet he continues to live openly in California. Mohamed obtains the document, though it is not clear how he obtained it. (9/11 Commission 6/16/2004; 9/11 Commission 7/24/2004, pp. 472) US prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald will later state that when Mohamed's California residence is finally searched in 1998 (see August 24, 1998), investigators discover "a sensitive sealed document from the trial of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman with notations indicating that [he sent it] to the head of the Kenyan al-Qaeda cell for delivery to bin Laden. I shudder to think of the people who may read this statement and where it may be found some day." (9/11 Commission 6/16/2004) A later government indictment will say that Mohamed sent the list to Wadiah El-Hage in Kenya who was told to hand deliver it to bin Laden in Afghanistan. (Lynch and Loeb 8/1/1999) If that is not enough to prove Mohamed's duplicity, when El-Sayyid Nosair is defended in this trial, Nosair's lawyers will expose more evidence about Mohamed. They argue

that Nosair's activities were part of a US-sponsored covert operation to train and arm the mujaheddin. They argue that Mohamed was the key link in this operation, and present evidence and witnesses showing how Mohamed trained the bomb plotters in 1989 (see July 1989). They mention the classified military manuals

that Mohamed stole and gave the group (see November 5, 1990). Mohamed's name and role in these activities come out publicly during the trial, and the Washington Post reports in 1998 that after hearing this testimony, "the FBI began to focus on Mohamed as a potential terrorism suspect." Yet both US intelligence and al-Qaeda apparently continue to work with him. (Weiser 10/30/1998; Risen 10/31/1998)

February 3, 1995: Article Exposes Ali Mohamed's Militant and US Intelligence Connections

A Boston Globe article publicly exposes Ali Mohamed, calling him "a shadowy individual described by defense attorneys as a key figure in the largest terrorism trial in US history." The trial is the prosecution of Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman and others for the 1993 "Landmarks" bombing plot (see June 24, 1993). The Globe article notes that Mohamed was in the US Special Forces and connects him to both Abdul-Rahman's radical militant group and the CIA. A senior US official claims that Mohamed's "presence in the country is the result of an action initiated by [the CIA]." The article further states, "Senior officials say Mohamed, who is of Egyptian origin, benefited from a little known visa-waiver program that allows the CIA and other security agencies to bring valuable agents into the country, bypassing the usual immigration formalities. Intelligence sources say that waivers are controlled by the CIA's Department of Operations, the clandestine side of the agency, and have been used 'sparingly' in recent years. Waivers are generally used to bring into the country people who have served the agency in sensitive positions overseas. They come here, an intelligence officer said, because they fear for their lives, have been promised asylum in return for cooperation, or need to be debriefed after an operation." According to the article, "Mohamed dropped out of sight several years ago, and his whereabouts remain unknown." But in fact, the FBI interviewed him three months earlier and remains aware of his whereabouts (see December 9, 1994). Mohamed will continue to work with al-Qaeda despite this exposure. (Quinn-Judge and Sennott 2/3/1995)

September 1, 1995: Judge's Ruling Ensures that Ali Mohamed Does Not Have to Testify in Trial, Even Though Prosecution Knows Where He Is

Defense counsel for El Sayyid Nosair, one of the militants accused in the "Landmarks" bomb plot (see June 24, 1993) along with the "Blind Sheikh," Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, applies for a missing witness instruction for double agent Ali Mohamed. The counsel, Roger Stavis, believes that it would benefit his client to have Mohamed testify, because Mohamed worked for militants connected to Abdul-Rahman as well as the FBI (see 1990), CIA (see 1984), and US army (see 1986). Therefore, Stavis might be able to use Nosair's connection with Mohamed to convince the jury that Nosair was acting on the instructions of an agent of the US government. Stavis has been attempting to contact Mohamed with no success for some time, although the prosecution is in contact with him where he lives in California (see December 1994-January 1995). Under federal law, a trial judge can give a missing witness instruction if one party at a trial wants a witness to testify but cannot find him, whereas the other party can find him but does not seem to want him to testify. Based on such an instruction, the jury can then decide that the party that could find him, but did not get him to testify, did so deliberately because it thought the testimony would be damaging to it. Author Peter Lance will later comment that, given the circumstances, "Stavis had every right to expect that jury charge," but Judge Michael Mukasey merely responds, "I don't think a missing witness charge on that gentleman is warranted and I am not going to give one." Lance will comment that by failing to grant the missing witness instruction, Mukasey helps "bury the significance" of Mohamed, and conceal his role in Islamic militancy from the public. (Lance 2006, pp. 208; Lance 9/25/2007) President Bush will later appoint Mukasey to be the US attorney general (see November 8, 2007).

(July-August 2001): Some 9/11 Hijackers Obtain Fake IDs

Khalid Almihdhar obtains a fake USA ID card from forger Mohamed el-Atriss. Abdulaziz Alomari also obtains fake ID, an international driver's license, from el-Atriss, and some of the other hijackers may do as well. (National Public Radio 8/20/2002; Hanley 6/25/2003; Lance 2006, pp. 372-3; Kelly 9/11/2006) USA ID cards are not issued by governmental organizations, as are passports and driver's licenses, for example. They are marketed by the manufacturer as being suitable for frequent customers to small businesses, such as VIP diners at a restaurant, gym members, and visitors to a check cashing store. (Usaidsystems (.com) 7/1/2007) El-Atriss, who is called seven times by Hani Hanjour and also by another unknown hijacker, is an associate of Waleed al-Noor, a co-conspirator in the 1993 'Landmarks' bomb plot (see June 24, 1993), and will be sentenced to six months in jail after 9/11 despite being of assistance to the FBI (see Before September 11,



Nawaf Alhazmi's USA ID card, recovered from the Pentagon crash site.
[Source: US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division] (click image to enlarge)

2001, September 13, 2001-Mid 2002, and November 2002-June 2003). (Associated Press 7/3/2003; Lance 2006, pp. 372-3; Kelly 9/11/2006) An image of Almihdhar's card, which gives his address as a hotel where he stayed for two nights after returning to the US a few days before, will be reproduced in the 9/11 Commission's Terrorism Travel Monograph, but the Commission will fail to point out it was a fake. (9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 192 ; US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 52) Five other hijackers obtain USA ID cards

around this time: Nawaf Alhazmi, Salem Alhazmi, Abdulaziz Alomari, Majed Moqed, and Ahmed Alghamdi. (9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 27-29, 31-32, 34-44) Almihdhar's card is similar to some of these hijackers' USA ID cards, indicating they may also be fake, although this is not certain. Nawaf Alhazmi's USA ID card contains the same hotel address and the same expiry date as Almihdhar's card. (US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006) Salem Alhazmi's card contains the same expiry date, indicating it was issued at a time Salem Alhazmi was out of the country (see April 23-June 29, 2001). In addition, the serial numbers are similar: the number of Salem Alhazmi's card, which was supposedly issued on July 1 or 2, is 3408826-A, whereas the number of Almihdhar's card, which the 9/11 Commission says was issued eight or nine days later, is 3408825-A. (9/11 Commission 8/21/2004, pp. 192 ; Burger and Bennett 8/29/2005) The fake document for Alomari is purchased from el-Atriss' All Service Plus business in Paterson, New Jersey, by fellow hijacker Nawaf Alhazmi. (CBS News 7/31/2002; US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division 7/31/2006, pp. 61 ; Kelly 9/11/2006)

Before September 11, 2001: Some 9/11 Hijackers Have Same Mailing Address as 'Blind Sheikh' and His Associate Did



The Sphinx Trading sign. [Source: National Geographic]

Some of the 9/11 hijackers rent mailboxes from a company called Sphinx Trading, which was also used by 'Blind Sheikh' Omar Abdul-Rahman and at least one of his associates. The mailboxes are located in Jersey City, New Jersey, four doors down from the mosque where Abdul-Rahman was imam in the early 1990s. El Sayyid Nosair, who assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane and was linked to the Islamic militant cell Abdul-Rahman headed (see November 5, 1990 and December 7, 1991), also had a mailbox there before he was arrested in 1990. Sphinx Trading is owned by Waleed al-Noor, who was named an unindicted co-conspirator at the 'Landmarks' bomb plot trial (see June 24, 1993). The hijackers will later obtain fake IDs from al-Noor's partner, Mohamed el-Atriss. The names of the

hijackers who had mailboxes there are never given, but in the summer of 2001 el-Atriss interacts with hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi, Abdulaziz Alomari, Khalid Almihdhar, and Hani Hanjour (see (July-August 2001)), at least. (Hanley 6/25/2003; Schwanberg 10/20/2003; Lance 2006, pp. 372-4; Kelly 9/11/2006) An FBI agent will later comment: "The fact that this location was where Almihdhar, in particular, got his bogus credentials, is not only shocking, it makes me angry. The [Joint Terrorist Task Force] in the [New York Office] had this location back in 1991. In the mid-90s they listed al-Noor, the coowner, as a coconspirator, unindicted in the plot to blow up bridges and tunnels. And now we find out that this is the precise location where the most visible of all the hijackers in the US got his ID? Incredible. All the Bureau's New York Office had to do was sit on that place over the years and they would have broken right into the 9/11 plot." (Lance 2006, pp. 373)

January 29, 2009: Former Bush Lawyer Says US Must Continue Detaining, Torturing Terror Suspects

John Yoo, the former Bush administration legal adviser who authored numerous opinions on the legality of torture, detentions without legal representation, and warrantless wiretapping (see November 6-10, 2001, December 28, 2001, January 9, 2002, August 1, 2002, and August 1, 2002, among others), writes an op-ed

for the Wall Street Journal opposing the Obama administration's intent to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility (see January 20, 2009 and January 22, 2009)) and restrict the CIA's ability to torture detainees (see January 22, 2009). Yoo, now a law professor and a member of the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, writes that while President Obama's decision "will please his base" and ease the objections to the Bush "imperial presidency," it will "also seriously handicap our intelligence agencies from preventing future terrorist attacks." Yoo writes that the Obama decisions mark a return "to the failed law enforcement approach to fighting terrorism that prevailed before Sept. 11, 2001." Yoo recommends that Obama stay with what he calls "the Bush system" of handling terror suspects. Yoo fails to note that the US law enforcement system prevented, among others, the "millennium bombing" plot (see December 14, 1999), the plot to bomb New York City's Lincoln and Holland Tunnels (see June 24, 1993), and Operation Bojinka (see January 6, 1995).

Obama Needs to be Able to Torture Prisoners Just as Bush Did, Yoo Declares - And by eschewing torture, Obama is giving up any chance on forcing information from "the most valuable sources of intelligence on al-Qaeda" currently in American custody. The Bush administration policies prevented subsequent terrorist attacks on the US, Yoo contends, and Obama will need the same widespread latitude to interrogate and torture prisoners that Bush employed: "What is needed are the tools to gain vital intelligence, which is why, under President George W. Bush, the CIA could hold and interrogate high-value al-Qaeda leaders. On the advice of his intelligence advisers, the president could have authorized coercive interrogation methods like those used by Israel and Great Britain in their antiterrorism campaigns. (He could even authorize waterboarding, which he did three times in the years after 9/11.)" It is noteworthy that Yoo refused to confirm that Bush ordered waterboarding of suspects during his previous Congressional hearings (see June 26, 2008).

Interrogations Must be 'Polite' - According to Yoo, in forcing the CIA and other US interrogators to follow the procedures outlined in the Army Field Manual, they can no longer use "coercive techniques, threats and promises, and the good-cop bad-cop routines used in police stations throughout America.... His new order amounts to requiring—on penalty of prosecution—that CIA interrogators be polite. Coercive measures are unwisely banned with no exceptions, regardless of the danger confronting the country." (Yoo 1/29/2009) Yoo is incorrect in this assertion. The Army Field Manual explicitly countenances many of the "coercive techniques, threats and promises, and the good-cop bad-cop routines" Yoo says it bans. Further, the Field Manual says nothing about requiring interrogators to be "polite." (Army 9/2006) And actual field interrogators such as the Army's Matthew Alexander have repeatedly said that torturing prisoners is ineffective and counterproductive, while building relationships and treating prisoners with dignity during interrogations produces usable, reliable intelligence (see November 30, 2008).

Shutting Down Military Commissions - Obama's order to stay all military commission trials and to review the case of "enemy combatant" Ali Saleh al-Marri (see June 23, 2003) is also mistaken, Yoo writes. Yoo fears that Obama will shut down the military commissions in their entirety and instead transfer detainees charged with terrorist acts into the US civilian court system. He also objects to Obama's apparent intent to declare terrorists to be prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions, instead of following the Bush precedent of classifying terrorists "like pirates, illegal combatants who do not fight on behalf of a nation and refuse to obey the laws of war." To allow terror suspects to have rights under Geneva and the US legal system, Yoo asserts, will stop any possibility of obtaining information from those suspects. Instead, those suspects will begin using the legal system to their own advantage—refusing to talk, insisting on legal representation and speedy trials instead of cooperating with their interrogators. "Our soldiers and agents in the field will have to run more risks as they must secure physical evidence at the point of capture and maintain a chain of custody that will stand up to the standards of a civilian court," Yoo writes. (Yoo 1/29/2009) In reality, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (see June 30, 2006), as well as the Detainee Treatment Act (see December 15, 2005) and the Military Commissions Act (see October 17, 2006), all mandate that detainees must be handled according to the Geneva Conventions.

Risk to Americans - Another effect of transferring detainees into the civilian justice system, Yoo claims, is to allow "our enemies to obtain intelligence on us." Defense lawyers will insist on revealing US intelligence—information and methods—in open court, and will no doubt force prosecutors to accept plea bargains "rather than risk disclosure of intelligence secrets."

Obama 'Open[ed] the Door to Further Terrorist Acts on US Soil' - Obama said in his inaugural speech that the US must "reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals." Yoo calls that statement "naïve," and writes, "That high-flying rhetoric means that we must give al-Qaeda—a hardened enemy committed to our destruction—the same rights as garden-variety criminals at the cost of losing critical intelligence about

real, future threats.” By making his choices, Yoo writes, “Mr. Obama may have opened the door to further terrorist acts on US soil by shattering some of the nation’s most critical defenses.” (Yoo 1/29/2009)

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